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January 31, 1975

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Consequences Within Cambodia of a Communist Takeover*

1. The immediate objective of the Khmer Communists (KC) following any capitulation of the Cambodian Government (GKR) would be the occupation of urban centers so as to fully disarm the Cambodian Armed Forces (FANK) and take over the machinery of state. Bloodletting would be inevitable as KC units mopped up pockets of resistance and their leaders settled old scores with some leading provincial and national GKR officials and senior FANK officers unable to flee the country. Bureaucrats, technicians, intelligentsia, and former FANK officers would no doubt be subjected to an intense indoctrination and "re-education" process which would most likely involve incarceration, coercion, and some, but probably not mass, exemplary executions. The lower strata of urban society would probably undergo a less formal and traumatic process.

2. Once in full control of the former GKR zones, the KC would begin pursuing the long-term objective: centralization of control over the instruments of production by a KC government. Essentially this would mean the implementation in the former GKR zones of programs long underway in KC controlled territory. These would include:

- the confiscation of privately-owned land and the tools of agriculture and the establishment of Communist-controlled collectives;
- the gradual replacement of Buddhism by Communist-controlled mass front organizations;
- the destruction of the traditional administrative system and its replacement by a centralized government under the leadership of the Khmer Communist Party;
- the nationalization of all light industry and means of commerce.

* This memorandum, prepared under the aegis of the National Intelligence Officer for South and Southeast Asia, was drafted by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within CIA.

3. Such measures have not gone down well with the land-proud and independent-minded Cambodian peasantry and over the years have caused almost two million peasants to abandon their farms and flee to the GKR zone. Smoldering resentment among those that have remained behind has on occasion resulted in small-scale uprisings which the KC have put down ruthlessly. Even if they won full control of the country, they would continue to meet similar resistance to their programs. The KC lack the organizational pool of well trained cadres possessed by their Vietnamese allies, but they could be expected to push their efforts to regiment and collectivize Khmer society relentlessly, using force where necessary.

4. Most population centers in zones presently controlled by the GKR would have large numbers of refugees following a KC takeover and, except for the Battambang area, stocks of basic commodities would be extremely low. Living conditions for all would deteriorate markedly as these commodities ran out. To ease the situation the KC would forcefully resettle the large numbers of refugees now in the GKR zone and might also have to evacuate many city-dwellers into the countryside where conditions would not be much better. The Communists would have major difficulties in coping with refugees and with supply shortages for some months -- and the population would suffer real hardship -- unless the KC were provided liberal and rapid assistance.

5. The situation would ease as soon as the next seasonal crop cycle began, although difficulties would remain. Some dependence on imported foods might persist, but consumption of vegetable crops with short growing spans and use of readily available fish would reduce external needs. Since so much of the sharp decline in rice production from the 3.8 million ton level in 1969 to less than 1 million tons in recent years has been a function of wartime disruption to the countryside, there is an excellent chance that Cambodia would rapidly reapproach self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs even without significant changes in technology or major inputs of equipment or chemicals.

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6. Attached as of possible interest are several earlier brief memoranda prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency on various aspects of rule in areas of Cambodia already under KC control.

[Redacted]

January 29, 1974

The Khmer Communists' "Communal" Campaign

One of the most controversial aspects of the Khmer Communists' administration in rural areas has been the insurgents' attempts to abolish private land ownership and to collectivize labor. The communists refer to this activity as their "commune" program.

Late last year, in pursuit of a directive issued by the Khmer Communist Central Committee, local Communist officials began a countrywide push to hasten the development of existing communes and to create new ones. This task has been undertaken with considerable zeal in the northern and northwestern regions of the country. As a first step in Siem Reap Province, for example, the Communists recently announced "state" ownership of all individual and village-held property. At the same time, 25X1 senior Khmer Communist officials in the neighboring provinces of Battambang and Pursat have been implementing measures to collectivize labor.

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The land-proud and independent-minded Khmer peasant generally has reacted in a predictably negative manner to these campaigns. In the northwest, the combination of harsh regulations and strict penalties has caused the flight of more than 2,000 families into government areas. To try to deter additional defections, Communist officials in Pursat Province have on occasion resorted to arrest and execution of uncooperative villagers. Such actions have in turn led to minor village uprisings -- not only in Pursat but also in several other provinces.

Besides their basic opposition to the principle of collectivization, many villagers resent the fact that much of the food produced by the communes is for the benefit of Khmer Communist

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military forces.

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There is evidence that in some areas of the countryside the Communists are looking for ways to make their commune program less offensive to the villagers. In other areas, however, they show no sign of relaxing such harsh policies as communal living, collective farming by small groups, and the rationing of paddy for individual consumption. These policies prompted a large-scale peasant demonstration in one Communist-controlled sector in southeastern Cambodia in late December. Communist troops quickly broke up the demonstration and local insurgent officials subsequently indicated that even stricter communal policies would be instituted. Although the Communists probably will be able to keep their collectivization program going, it seems likely that over the long term it will prove to be a significant barrier to widespread political support for the Communists in the countryside.

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[redacted] January 22, 1974

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The Rebellious Chams

The Khmer Communists are encountering some serious problems with the Chams, the fourth largest minority group in Cambodia. Chafing under an increasingly harsh Khmer Communist administration, Cham villagers in the northern provinces of Kratie and Kompong Cham since last October have staged small-scale revolts. In some areas, they have killed Khmer Communist officials and troops. Farther south, Chams in Kandal and Prey Veng Provinces have been subjected to equally severe treatment, but many have fled to South Vietnam.

The Communists have depended on the Chams as a major source of manpower for insurgent units northeast of Phnom Penh. Following their unsuccessful offensive against Kompong Cham City last September, the Communists increased conscription to help make up the heavy losses they suffered.

The Chams' Islamic religious beliefs have been another major source of conflict. Since early 1972, the Communists have tried to suppress Cham religious practices. Their subsequent decision to abolish these practices has caused further friction between themselves and the Chams.

Cham villagers are also dissatisfied with Khmer Communist economic policies that require collectivization of both land and labor. Strict Communist travel restrictions, which prevent villagers from trading and selling goods in government-controlled areas, have added to the Chams' economic difficulties.

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The Cham revolt against the Khmer Communists appears to have gained fairly widespread support and some degree of organization.

25X1 Despite the unrest, the Khmer Communists apparently have been unwilling to relax unpopular administrative controls over the Chams.

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The Chams have sought several times to obtain aid from Phnom Penh in support of their cause. The government has indicated indirectly that the Cambodian Army cannot undertake operations to help the Chams, however, because it cannot spare the troops. Many senior Army officers distrust the Chams and have no desire to help them. Despite the government's negative response, some leaders still claim that they can successfully resist the Communists, if they can somehow obtain sufficient weapons.

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February 5, 1974

Problems in the Pagodas

The Khmer Communists are continuing their efforts to erase the influence of the Buddhist-clergy and of Buddhist doctrine over the peasantry.

The Communists consider the monks -- who rely on local villagers for their subsistence -- as unproductive members of society who tax the already meager food supply. The Buddhist practice of encouraging young men to spend time in religious study in local pagodas has also deprived the Khmer Communists of many needed recruits. In many areas, the Communists have reacted to these traditional practices by forbidding villagers to give food to the monks and by limiting visits to the pagodas.

The monks have been ordered to raise their own food and livestock. Some have been organized into teams to work at such communal tasks as bridge-repair and the construction of ox-carts. Boys under 12 years of age are still allowed to study at the pagodas, but those over that age are forced to join Khmer Communist village militia and territorial units rather than undergo religious training.

Many monks have reluctantly complied with these changes, but a few have fled to government-held areas. To encourage greater cooperation, the Communists have been sending groups of dissident monks away from their villages for political indoctrination. Such tactics, however, have made it more difficult for the Communists to control local villagers. In most villages, the population has relied on the monks for leadership, and when the monks were drafted into military service or sent for political training, the villagers would not transfer their allegiance to the Khmer Communists. In an effort to impose tighter control, the Communists have chosen politically reliable monks to return to the villages to provide leadership and conduct indoctrination lectures for the other monks.

It is highly unlikely that the clergy will ever fully accept Communism, Khmer-style. Many monks reportedly believe that if a peaceful settlement is not reached soon, the combination of Commu-

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nist restrictions which prevent young men from entering the monasteries and the modification of traditional ways will threaten the survival of their religion.

The monks' opposition to the war and to its disruptive and destructive impact on the country is not confined to areas under Communist control. In Phnom Penh, there are signs of increasing war-weariness among the capital's clergy. Late last month, for example, a new organization of neutralists staged a brief hunger strike to induce "Khmer on both sides" to begin peace negotiations. Although the head of the organization readily agreed to the government's call for an end to the strike, he promised unspecified but strong action if the government ignores its responsibility to rebuild destroyed pagodas. In a related development, the 1,000-man strong association of student monks in Phnom Penh went on public record on January 29 in favor of the opening of peace talks. The association also asked that big powers involved in the conflict help seek its rapid end, and requested the aid of all religious and peace-loving international bodies to assist in restoring peace quickly.

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